



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

February 2000

Channeling the flow of disaster donations

by Russ Knapp, VDES Planner

As the floodwaters of Hurricane Floyd receded, a deluge of another sort was poised to quickly pour into the devastated communities in southeastern Virginia.

With debris cleanup under way, a mountain of canned goods, clothing, cleaning supplies, appliances, furniture, toys and cash began to amass as concerned citizens attempted to reach out to disaster victims.

Dan Grimes, a VDES reservist, got to work setting up donations management operations at the Hampton Disaster Field Office (DFO) immediately following Floyd. One of the first items on the agenda was establishing a toll-free Virginia Donations Hotline (1-877-245-5513).

Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VAVOAD) coordinated the hotline operations, which served



High tide. A volunteer at Tucker Swamp Baptist Church near Zuni sorts donated food items for distribution to flood victims (photo by JoAnn West, "The Smithfield Times").

as a communications hub for callers from across the state and nation. A steady stream of volunteers from local churches and disaster relief agencies staffed the four telephone lines at the DFO attempting to match donations with needs in

the disaster area. These calls came in by the hundreds from individuals, church and school groups, small and large office groups, Boy and Girl Scouts, neighborhood and civic groups.

Each potential donor received an acknowledgement

letter from the DFO and instructions not to take these goods to the disaster area without prior clearance from a relief agency.

Grimes and I supervised the donations operation and were in regular contact with relief agencies in the Franklin and Southampton areas that were receiving the donations.

We visited these relief centers to verify the appropriate goods/donations were being sent to meet victims' needs. We also got a firsthand look at the enormous amount of time and energy local volunteers have expended to coordinate the operation.

After the DFO closed on Dec. 3, the donations hotline was redirected to the VDES administrative headquarters in Richmond. I continue to screen offers to avoid inundating the still active donations pipeline into impacted areas.

Reports from disaster relief agencies indicate the Franklin area still needs canned goods, cleaning and building supplies, laborers and funding to rebuild homes in what is anticipated to be a two-year effort.

As a result of Hurricane Floyd experiences, VDES now permanently operates the hotline to channel contributions for this and future declared disasters in the Commonwealth.

For more information, contact Russ Knapp at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6258.

Tornado Preparedness Day — Know the drill



Drop, cover and hold ... a tornado drill. That's the message VDES and the National Weather Service (NWS) are sending to Virginia schools, businesses and organizations in the month of March.

Governor Jim Gilmore has proclaimed March 28 as "Tornado Preparedness Day" in Virginia to focus attention specifically on tornadoes and to encourage these entities to have special preparedness activities.

Tornado drills increase public knowledge of proper safety measures to follow when a tornado warning is issued. NWS will activate National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio statewide with a 9:45 a.m.

test warning on that date to facilitate local drills. Videos, posters and brochures are available for local educational efforts. Contact Janet Clements at (804) 897-6510 for more information.

Putting hearing impaired in planning picture

By Leslie Hutcheson, Va. Dept. for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Consider this. Hurricane Xavier, a huge Category 5 storm, is bearing down on the Virginia coast. You know this because you have seen the weather warning scroll across the bottom of the television.

You want to follow the track of the storm and to find out what is happening in your community. For you, television is only pictures — no sound. You have long ago turned on the “CC” (closed captioning) button on your TV remote control. This time, nothing happens. You still see only the picture.

When the newscast breaks for a commercial, words appear at the bottom of the screen in a black box, so you know the captioning is working.

When the newscast resumes, there are no more words on the screen. You see video of a tornado streaking through a neighborhood — but which neighborhood? Without sound or captioning, you have no idea.

The program then cuts to an interview with the local emergency services coordinator — but what is he saying? Should you evacuate? A telephone number flashes on the screen.

It does not show a TTY number so you do not know if you will be able to call it. You try anyway. After three hang-ups, you know that you will need to call through the Virginia Relay, where a communications assistant will translate the words you type into spoken language.

Isn't a hurricane or any other emergency situation bad enough without the added stress of not knowing what is happening and what you should do? In this information age, most Americans have easy access to the news they need.

Local emergency planners and community agencies spend a lot of time preparing to respond in an emergency to make sure they can reach the most people with the most information. Despite these best efforts, people who are deaf or hard of hearing often get very little information.

Local television stations are one of the keys to reaching the deaf and hard of hearing community, but most do not caption unscripted live reports, nor do they caption weather reports.



In the know. Closed-captioned television broadcasts are just one method of informing hearing impaired and deaf citizens about emergency or disaster situations. Interpreters and TTY telephones are also critical for disseminating information.

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) is available to assist in emergency planning to ensure that Virginians who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to the same critical information that all other Virginians receive in a time of crisis. VDHH services include:

▼ **Contracts with qualified interpreters across the state.**

Many of these interpreters have identified themselves as available to assist in emergency situations.

▼ **Contracts with local outreach service providers.** These professionals are available to participate in your planning process. They can provide training for police, community planners and other key emergency service providers.

▼ **Assistance to local emergency coordinators in providing TTY-accessible telephone service.** Information on purchasing TTYs and training on using them is also available.

For more information on including the deaf and hard of hearing in your plans, contact us at 1-800-552-7917 (V/TTY).

Making local business a partner in disaster planning



How do businesses protect their assets and economic stability when disaster strikes? By creating and implementing disaster plans, of course.

Unfortunately, many companies of all sizes are operating today without this important safety net.

In the Roanoke Valley, the Project Impact communities of Roanoke, Salem, Roanoke County and Vinton have recognized the importance of the business component in reducing the impact of emergencies and disasters in their area and instituted a one-day workshop on developing and implementing disaster plans.

“We have a partnership workgroup with 78 businesses and organizations that is really active with big ideas and lots of energy,” says Maureen Castern, Project Impact Coordinator. “They came up with the idea.”

Held last fall, the first workshop covered such topics as fires, floods and severe weather, explosions, hazardous spills and workplace violence. She says the program was a success with representatives from 26 area businesses attending.

Participants came from diverse backgrounds including retail, banking and nonprofit organizations. She says these individuals came to the table with varying levels of sophistication and issues ranging from the engineering firm whose surveyors faced threats on the job to the mall management who needed to confront the prospect of patrons carrying guns. Those with existing plans were asked to bring them for review while others developed them during the workshop.

“The greatest misconception businesses have about [disaster] planning is that ‘it’s not going to happen to us,’” says course instructor Tim Fitzgerald.

(continued on page 4)

Changes on the horizon for 'tech haz' training in 2000

By Ron Hargrave

Technological Hazards Training Supervisor

As we begin what promises to be another action-packed year, technological hazards training will build upon the momentum we gained in 1999.

In addition to the normal delivery of courses, changes and updates to the curriculum, and conference planning, we also developed a new course for the Hazmat responder titled "Branch & Safety Officer."

This additional course and other proposals in the works will require significant modifications to the training program in 2000, particularly at the specialist level. Additionally, we will offer an increased number of classes in the Terrorism Program at both the Awareness and Management levels.

Changes also occurred within the State Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Advisory Council's (SHMERAC) training subcommittee. Deputy Chief Willie Howlett, James City County Fire Department, and Chief Gerald Snellings, Fredericksburg Fire Department, were elected as the chairman and vice-chairman (respectively) of the committee.



The next SHMERAC meeting will be held in Virginia Beach, February 23, at 10 a.m. in conjunction with the State Fire Chief's meeting. This session will help solidify new training developments, which will be introduced in future issues of *Update*.

All these new developments would not be possible without quality instructors to convey our messages to responders in the field. That's why I'm so pleased to have Pat Collins join our team.

Along with a soon-to-be-announced additional trainer, Pat will play an integral role in charting this new course and could not have come at a more opportune time.

As you will see from the article below, he has the background and training abilities to help us continue to deliver professional, quality and informative Terrorism and Hazmat training into the new millennium.

For more information on the future of 'tech haz' training, please call our office at 804-897-6500, ext. 6571.

Instructor proves 'picture perfect' fit



Pat Collins recently joined the VDES family as a technical instructor focusing on terrorism, awareness and management programs and hazmat training. Prior to his current position, Collins served as the Chesterfield County Fire Department Safety Officer and was also a member of their hazmat team.

Collins has a bachelor of science degree in safety from Virginia Commonwealth University. He also holds numerous firefighter and safety certifications and has been an adjunct instructor for the Department of Fire Programs (DFP) for more

than 10 years. He has taught classes for the DFP as well as the National Fire Academy statewide.

In his "other life," Collins is an accomplished, semi-professional nature photographer whose work has been published in more than 30 national magazines, encyclopedias and books.

Collins says he sees his new position with the Technological Hazards Division as a "tremendous learning opportunity" and looks forward to teaching the blocks on terrorism awareness/prevention. He will also work on course development that will deal with terrorism and hazardous materials response.



Task force takes bow

Demonstrating the power of the "force," the Virginia Disaster Recovery Task Force has been selected for inclusion in Volume IV of "Partnerships in Preparedness: A Compendium of Exemplary Practices in Emergency Management."

Simply put, an exemplary practice is a project, program or technique that works in one place and is worth trying elsewhere. Task Force Coordinator Selby Jacobs says the task force concept is "really designed to put people back to where they were before a disaster occurred."

Jacobs says VDES and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development created the task force concept after Hurricane Fran in 1996.

"We focused on unmet needs existing after traditional response organizations such as FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and the Red Cross came into the picture," says Jacobs. "We emphasize building a community collaboration representing a cross section of the population and bringing together different groups that have taken on response roles following a disaster."

He says it is important to remember that a local task force is not a "one-shot deal" and the program has been successful in jurisdictions like the city of Suffolk that have taken the time to establish a local task force.

This compendium provides a means for developing cooperation and leveraging emergency management talent and resources in both the public and private sectors.

Volumes I-III are available now on the Internet at www.fema.gov/library/lib07.htm. Volume IV should be distributed to emergency managers in the next few months. To learn more about the task force, contact Selby Jacobs at (804) 371-7070.

Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Decision Making in a Crisis
Feb. 8/Richmond

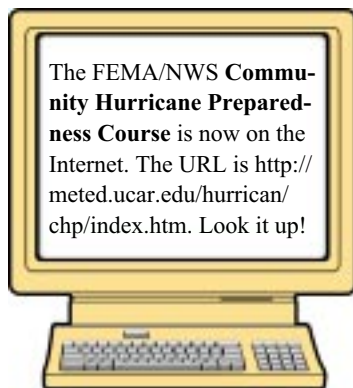
Coordinator's Briefing
Feb. 10/Williamsburg

Emergency Planning Workshop
Feb. 15-17/Virginia Beach

ICS/EOC Interface
Feb. 23-24/Newport News

**Hazardous Weather and
Flooding Preparedness**
Feb. 29-March 2/Charlottesville

**Mass Fatalities Incident
Management**
March 28-30/Fairfax



Reservist Training

Reservist Program Orientation
Feb. 23/Richmond

**Information and Planning Branch
Workshops** Feb. 29/Richmond

**Public Information Officer
Procedural Review Seminar**
March 1/Richmond

VEOC Tabletop Exercise
March 2/Richmond

**State Emergency Response
Team Exercise (SERTEX 2000)**
March 8/VEOC

Search and Rescue

Field Team Member (Part I)
Feb. 11-13/Newport News

Inland SAR School
Feb. 14-18/Yorktown

GSAR Institute (Part II)
Feb. 25-27/Blue Ridge

Field Team Member (Part II)
March 10-12/Newport News Park

CAP-Sponsored GSAR (Part I)
March 17-19/Fort AP Hill

Inland SAR School
March 27-31/Yorktown

Technological Hazards

Team Leaders Meeting
March 28-29/Portsmouth

Business Planning (continued from page 2)

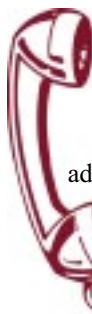
"We have always dealt with issues like fire and floods, but now we have to start looking at computer sabotage and workplace violence," Fitzgerald adds. "These are issues people haven't broached before and the new technology trends are starting to open people's eyes."

Fitzgerald, President of Safety and Compliance Services, Inc., also says companies of all sizes need to address how they will rebound and return to operations after the disaster is over. He says many are not prepared for the reality that sets in following the devastation.

"The sad part about it is that we're caught up in the adrenaline rush of the disaster and, when it's over, we still have to scrape the mud off our floors and rebuild," explains Fitzgerald. "Most large businesses today have the ability to sustain themselves, but smaller companies don't have that type of capital and you see people's lives go right down the drain."

"Most people just assume the government's going to make it right — that they'll take care of us and send us a lot of money. The fact of the matter is the government doesn't owe us anything and we owe it to ourselves to be prepared."

Castern says the Roanoke Valley group made a presentation on this issue at last year's FEMA Project Impact Summit and plans to hold another seminar Feb. 23 at the Hotel Roanoke. They will also hold a workshop for businesses in the flood plain March 14. For more information, contact Maureen Castern, Project Impact Coordinator, at (540) 345-6579.



Can't reach us?...

It may be because the number is no longer active in our new phone system. All employees in our administrative headquarters can now be reached by calling (804) 897-6500 and using an extension. A list of extensions is available on our Web site at www.vdes.state.va.us/vdesdir.cfm. If you do not have Internet access, call (804) 897-6510 for a copy.



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